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ABSTRACT

This document lists several prerequisites required for reading, especially those that relate to English as a Second Language students. The prerequisites listed include; the concept of print, which discusses the importance of a student being aware that printed material conveys thought through words which are at least similar, if not identical to oral speech; a knowledge of the graphic system, which emphasizes that the student must be able both to recognize that a graphic symbol is or is not a letter of the alphabet and to know the distinctive features of each letter; and the importance of a student being able to focus his eyes on fine print and move them from left to right. (WR)

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PREREQUISITES FOR READING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

RIGHT TO READ PROGRAM
BRISTOL COMMUNITY COLLEGE
FALL RIVER, MASSACHUSETTS

CS 001 422

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PREREQUISITES FOR READING

Reading requires a concept of print, a knowledge of the graphic system and the ability to focus and move the eyes according to the direction of the orthography.

CONCEPT OF PRINT

Prior to learning to read, a student must be aware that printed material conveys thoughts through words which are at least similar, if not identical to oral speech. ESL students may have varying degrees of familiarity with this concept. Many students illiterate in both languages will still have an idea of print through their general life experience. Students literate in their native language have had sufficient experience with this concept, providing the writing system is alphabetic in nature. Others who read a language recorded in ideographic characters may have to be initiated to an alphabetic form of writing. It is also possible for an ESL student familiar with a different alphabetic script to have a different orientation to print; some initiation to the Roman system may be necessary.

KNOWLEDGE OF THE GRAPHIC SYSTEM

The ability to name the letters of the alphabet is not required for initial reading instruction. Because the names do not very often relate to the sounds represented, memorizing their names prior to learning to read them in meaningful word groupings may prove to be a hindrance. It is necessary, however, for the student to be able to recognize that a graphic symbol is or is not a letter of the alphabet, and to know the distinctive features of each letter. As students begin to gain reading skill, the letters of the alphabet and their names will become part of their knowledge, either incidentally or through planned instruction if necessary.

EYE-FOCUS AND MOVEMENT

Learning to read English requires a student to be able to focus his eyes on fine print and move them from left to right. As his reading ability increases, the left to right movement gradually gives way to a movement from top to bottom with the reader using peripheral vision. The ESL student, depending upon the direction of the orthography of his native language and his degree of literacy in it, may need some eye training.